

In the Claims:

1-5. (cancelled)

6. (currently amended) A method of forming a single, separately identifiable bundle from a plurality of adjacently placed articles, each article bearing product information or advertising indicia on one or more surfaces thereof, while substantially obscuring the individual identification code on a surface of each of the articles in the bundle, thereby preventing an automated scanner from fully reading the individual identification codes, comprising the steps of:
arranging and at least partially wrapping the articles to form the bundles such that the product information or advertising indicia on at least one article is at least partially viewable while substantially obscuring the individual identification codes on each of the articles, the
~~method of claim 1,~~ wherein the wrapping step includes placing a first film only partially around the plurality of articles and the obscuring is accomplished by wrapping a second dark-colored, opaque, or patterned film only partially around the plurality of articles; ~~and further including the step of~~

at least partially securing the second film to the first film to form a sleeve around the articles, whereby the articles in the bundle may be identified from the product information or advertising indicia on the at least one article, but the obscuring prevents the automated scanner from reading the individual identification codes and identifying the bundle as a single article.

7. (original) The method of claim 6, wherein the first film is a transparent or clear

film formed of a material selected from the group consisting of polyolefin film, polyvinyl chloride film, polyethylene film, polypropylene film, and cellophane.

8. (original) The method of claim 7, including shrinking the sleeve to substantially secure the articles in the bundle against movement relative to each other.

9. (original) The method of claim 8, wherein the first and second films are polyethylene films and shrinking the sleeve includes heating and cooling the sleeve.

10. (currently amended) The method of claim 6, further including the step of applying a bundle identification code to the sleeve around the articles bundle.

11-17. (cancelled)

18-35. (withdrawn)

36. (new) A method of forming a single, separately identifiable bundle from a plurality of adjacent articles, while substantially obscuring an individual identification code on a surface of each of the articles, thereby preventing an automated scanner from fully reading the individual identification codes, comprising the steps of:

placing a first film at least partially over the group of articles, the first film at least partially exposing at least one surface of one of the articles for viewing;

placing a second film at least partially over the group of articles, the second film substantially obscuring the identification code on another surface of each article;

at least partially securing the first film to the second film on at least two sides of the group of articles to form a sleeve; and

shrinking the sleeve to form the bundle.

37. (new) The method according to claim 36, wherein the first film is a clear, transparent film and the second film is a colored, opaque, or patterned film capable of obscuring the individual identification codes.

38. (new) The method according to claim 37, wherein:
the first and second films comprise polyethylene films fed from continuous rolls,
and

securing the first film to the second film includes forming a first seal from the loose ends of the first and second films before the placing steps, and then using a heated device or cutter for simultaneously severing the first and second films from the continuous roll and forming a second seal adjacent a second side of the bundle after the placing steps.

39. (new) The method according to claim 36, wherein the step of placing the films includes advancing a first group of a plurality of articles into a first seal formed between the free ends of the first and second films and then forming a second seal adjacent behind the group of articles, and wherein the formation of the second seal forms a new first seal for a next-in-line

group of articles to be bundled.

40. (new) The method according to claim 36, wherein shrinking the sleeve to form the bundle includes initially heating and cooling the sleeve.

41. (new) The method according to claim 36, further including the step of placing an identification code on the sleeve around the articles, the code identifying at least the type and number of articles in the bundle.

42. (new) The method according to claim 36, further including the steps of:
placing an anti-theft device in or on one or more of the plurality of articles or on or in the bundle; and
placing a bundle identification code on the sleeve around the articles, the code identifying at least the presence of the anti-theft device.